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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes a junior high school reading laboratory located in Urbana (Illinois) Junior High School, Fisher Campus. The student population in the school numbers approximately 950. Students have individual schedules, with six instructional classes of fifty minutes per day. Students enrolled in the lab attend each day for a regular fifty-minute period. The lab is an elective for all students and in all but a few cases does not supplant the regular English classes. Instruction is individualized, prescriptive, and effective. Both remedial and developmental contracts are prepared for each student. The basis for this prescription is the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. The mean expected increase in reading achievement as measured by this test after two semesters in the lab is one year and three months. However, nearly 50% of the students in the lab may be expected to show an increase of one year or more each semester, with gains of 3-5 years per semester for some students. These data are consistent from year to year. (TS)

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JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL READING LABORATORY

A TITLE III, E.S.E.A. PROJECT
OF THE
ILLINOIS DIFFUSION NETWORK
ILLINOIS OFFICE OF EDUCATION
TITLE III, E.S.E.A. SECTION

NOVEMBER, 1975

URBANA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL-FISHER
1201 South Vine Street
Urbana, Illinois 61801
217-384-3568

Dr. Kermit Harden, Superintendent
Dr. Charles Young, Jr., Principal
Mrs. Tommie Calhoun, Director
Joseph M. Riggs, Dissemination Agent

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A student prepares for a lesson with the cassette recorder.

ABSTRACT

SETTING: The Junior High School Reading Laboratory (Lab) is located in Urbana Junior High School-Fisher Campus, Urbana, Illinois. The student population in the school numbers approximately 950. Grades 7,8, and 9 attend.

SCHEDULING: Students have individual schedules, with six instructional classes of fifty minutes each per day. Students enrolled in the Lab attend each day for a regular fifty-minute period. The Lab is an elective for all students, and in all but a few scattered cases does not supplant the regular English classes.

STAFF: The staff in the Lab consists of two teachers, two aides, and a half-time secretary.

INSTRUCTION: Instruction is individualized, prescriptive, and effective. Both remedial and developmental contracts are prepared for each student. The basis for this prescription is the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test.

RESULTS: The mean expected increase in reading achievement as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test after two semesters in the Lab is one year and three months. However, nearly 50% of the students in the Lab may be expected to show an increase of one year or more each semester, with gains of 3-5 years per semester for some students. These data are consistent from year to year.

ADOPTION: Under the aegis of the Illinois Diffusion Network, Title III, E.S.E.A. section of the Illinois Office of Education, the Lab can supply a limited amount of funding and a maximum amount of services to selected schools for adoption of the Junior High School Reading Laboratory.

The Junior High School Reading Laboratory (Lab) began operation in September, 1971, with a Title III, E.S.E.A. grant award. Urbana School District 116 has assumed responsibility for its operation and maintenance. It is presently in its fifth successful year of operation.

Located in Urbana Junior High School-Fisher Campus, the Lab serves approximately 160 students daily, with a total enrollment in the school of about 950. Students follow individual, rather than class or grade-level, schedules of 50-minute periods, with six instructional classes per day.

The Lab does not supplant regular English classes for most students. It is an elective for all pupils, but serves more seventh graders than eighth or ninth. All students registered in the Lab receive daily instruction for a regular period.

Staffing the Lab are one full-time teacher, one 2/3 time teacher, two full-time aides, and one half-time secretary. There are approximately 15 students to each complement of one teacher/one aide per class.

The physical facility of the Lab comprises about 2500 square feet of floor space in three contiguous classrooms, and furniture includes conventional desks, tables and chairs, carrels, and numerous bookcases and storage cabinets.

Those enrolling in Reading Lab take the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT), Form W, during the first week of the school year. It is upon this test that diagnoses and prescriptions are based. Form X of the Stanford is given at the close of the first semester, primarily to note gain scores, and Form W is once again administered as a post-test at the end of the school year.

Mr. Don Hornhostel and Mrs. Lynn Myers, two experienced teachers in the Reading Lab

Study carrels found in one room of the Lab provide good places to work

Using the subtests of the SDRT, reading comprehension, blending, vocabulary, sound discrimination, and syllabication, the teachers prepare a contract for every student. The contract lists the prescribed materials at appropriate levels to effect an increase in the reading level of that student. (A typical goal, or assignment, on a contract might be Detecting the Sequence, Book A, lessons 1-5. For each contract period of 4-6 weeks, a student must complete 8-10 goals, each of which must be mastered to at least 80%. Should a student fail to achieve 80% mastery on a lesson, he is permitted one opportunity to correct and raise his score to at least 80%. Failing this, the student is assigned an alternate lesson to complete, equal in difficulty, with the same objective.) All contracts, except by coincidence, are different. A part of contract preparation is the computation of the potential reading level of each student using the Bond Reading Expectancy Formula ((Number of years in school) X IQ/100 + 1). The difference between a student's potential level and his actual level as measured by the SDRT is then calculated. This difference is referred to as his DEFICIT, a term needed for explanation of the first of the two behavioral objectives.

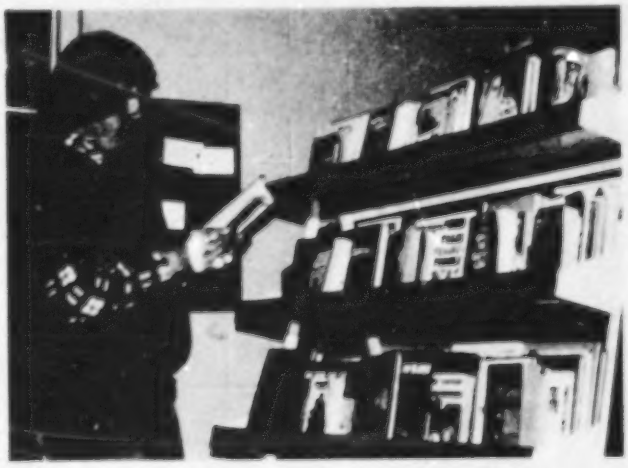
Behavioral objective number one is to reduce a student's deficit by 25% per semester as measured by the SDRT. This figure applies to all students in the Lab. (This objective has been changed since the program began. At the outset of the project, the objective was to reduce the deficit by 50% for all students. During the fourth year of operation this objective became dichotomous, to read: (1.) If a student's deficit is 3 years or greater, then he will reduce that deficit by 25% per semester, and; (2.) If a student's deficit is less than 3 years he will reduce that deficit by 50% per semester. This downward revision to its present criterion of 25% reduction of the deficit for all students in the Lab reflects the Lab's constant effort to establish realistic and manageable goals for its participants.

Behavioral objective number two is to increase the number of pages read by each student independently at a rate of 10% per week. Most students begin at the minimum baseline point of ten pages for the first week, although

some choose more. A figure of ten pages for week one, with a cumulative increase of 10% weekly, yields a straight-line graph showing a goal of 47 pages for week eighteen, the last week in the first semester. This represents a manageable quantity for the students. At the beginning of the second semester a student may begin again with a new baseline figure of ten pages or more for the first week of the second semester, or he may choose the more challenging avenue of continuity and begin with a goal of 48 pages. Should he select this option, his goal for the final week of the year would be about 235 pages.

Mrs. Ann Helm, an aide in the Lab, assisting students with an assignment

Non-graded and based on self-selection of materials, this part of the program closely resembles reading for entertainment in a non-school setting. There is, however, an added inducement; for each week that he reaches his 10% increase in independent reading, the student earns 10 points. A record of points earned--and spent--is kept on a credit sheet in the student's folder. With these points he can buy any book from the 800-1,000 paperbacks on display in the Lab. Such a transaction occurs most frequently during the weekly



Students often browse through the paperbacks to select books they wish to buy with points earned by doing independent reading

conferences, at which time the student makes his oral book report over the independent reading. The first book costs 10 points, the second, 20..., to 50 points for the fifth book bought. The sixth book, costing 10 points, begins the cycle anew with the low point-price because a student buying his sixth book will have already more than trebled his page count per week over his original number of pages read. The touchstone of this system is the number of books bought by students in the Lab. During school year 1974-75 alone, 682 paperbacks were sold and recorded by the Lab under the points system.

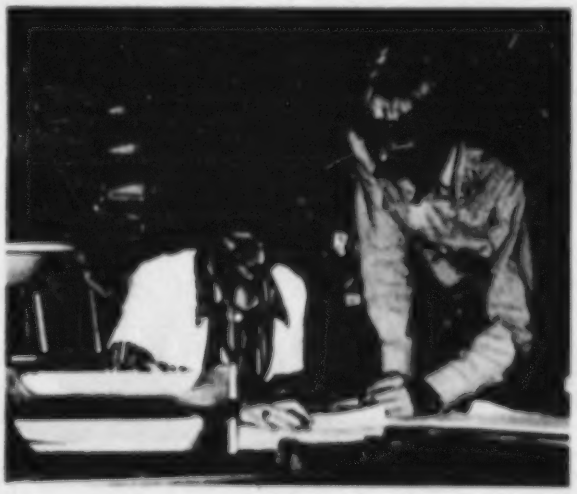
To effect the realization of these objectives, the two reading teachers perform these primary duties:

1. Administering and interpreting the SDRT;
2. Preparing the diagnosis and prescriptive contracts for each student;
3. Conferring with each student for approximately 10 minutes every week to monitor his progress on the contract, to further assess his ability, and to hear oral book reports on independent reading;
4. Evaluating student performance;
5. Assigning grades (students in the Lab receive regular report-card grades, A-F, for their work--in order to receive an A, a student must do more work than is assigned for his mandatory contract).

Assisting the teachers are the two full-time aides, without whom the Lab could not successfully operate. Their primary duties are these:

1. Immediate scoring of all worksheets (there is never more than a 24-hour delay in returning scored work to students);

2. Conducting small-group learning sessions with the controlled reader, tachistoscope, cassette recorders, and Aud-X;



Ms. Sari Wolgel, an aide, scoring the post-test after a controlled reader session

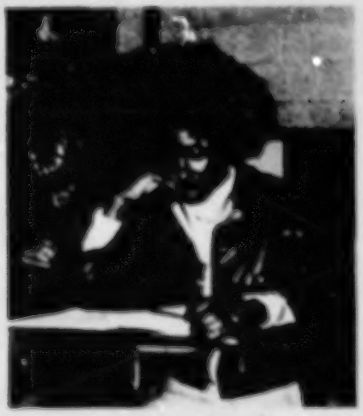
3. Supervising students;

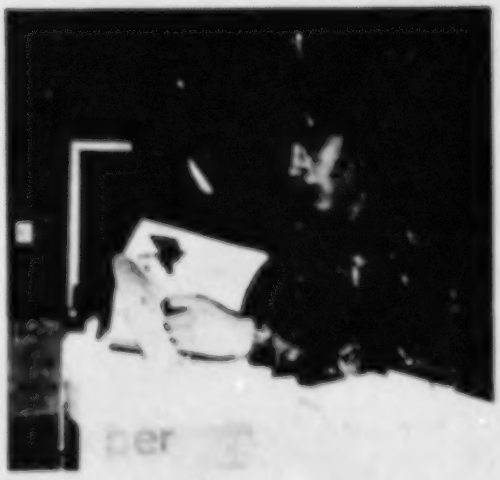
4. Providing assistance to working students who need explanations or other help;

5. Assisting the teachers in the preparation of contracts.

The importance of aide assistance in the Lab deserves emphasis; while the teachers are busy holding conferences with students, the aides are working at their desks scoring worksheets or at an A-V station conducting a group. (Students' self-scoring of work was tried in the beginning of the program, but due to an inordinate number of perfect papers was abandoned.) Small-group sessions conducted by the aides are an integral part of the prescriptive program for Lab students. For a teacher alone to accomplish conferences, scoring of work, group sessions, and classroom management would be a Sisyphean task.

What does a student do when he comes to the Lab for class? He enters the room, secures his folder, decides which goal he wants to work on first, goes to the shelf and selects the material, returns to his assigned seat, and begins to work. He may seek assistance from an aide or teacher at any time, and is limited in his independence of study only during scheduled group sessions or weekly conferences.





At any given time during class in the Lab, the activities of different students vary--some are studying at their desks, others are in groups, and some are selecting materials from the shelves

During its four years of operation thus far, the Reading Lab has consistently produced mean increases of over one year for two semesters in the Lab. These yearly mean increases range from 1.1 to 1.4 years. During 1974-75, for example, the mean grade level equivalent upon entering the Lab was 5.7, while the mean exit level was 7.0, an increase of 1.3. Lest one tend to regard these data as trifling, it should be noted that 45% of the entering seventh graders read at either the fourth or the fifth grade level. An additional 40% read below the fourth grade level, whereas only 15% of the entering seventh graders read at the seventh grade level or above. In the instance of a seventh grader who begins the seventh grade at a reading level of 3.0, it may be said (although not quite precisely), that he has progressed only 0.5 grade level equivalents for each year in school. Therefore, the Reading Lab more than doubles the progress such a student has been making. Additionally, by the time a student reaches seventh grade, if he is severely behind in his reading ability he will probably show little or no increase in reading level for the remainder of his public education career (which is more likely to be truncated because of his reading disability), if he receives no special reading instruction. On the other hand, evidence shows that poor readers can be helped by the application of appropriate instruction. According to Bond and Tinker, "With good motivation and sufficiently individualized instruction based upon careful diagnosis, progress will result. Obviously, the improvement in reading will be more rapid in some cases than in others. Nevertheless, if the pattern of difficulties has been discovered by accurate diagnosis, one rarely finds a case that does not respond satisfactorily." (See footnote)

Unfortunately, not all students show a gain after instruction in the Lab. Some students do failing work repeatedly on their contracts, and may even show a loss when tested on the SDRT after a semester's or a year's instruction. Of course, the motivation of these students would not be such as to promote the best performance on the SDRT. But most students clearly show a gain.

On the data table for the first semester, 1974-75, one may examine the range of those students showing an increase in reading achievement. Of 191 students in the Lab during that period, 119 showed positive gain scores on the SDRT, Form X, after the first semester's instruction. This table is found on page 8.

Bond, Guy L., and Miles A. Tinker. Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction, 2d edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957. Pages 4-5.

POSITIVE GAIN SCORES IN YEARS AFTER ONE SEMESTER IN THE LAB, FALL, 1974-75

5.1	2.2	1.2	.9	.6	.4
4.9	2.1	1.2	.9	.6	.3
4.4	2.0	1.2	.9	.6	.3
4.4	1.9	1.2	.9	.6	.3
4.3	1.9	1.2	.9	.6	.3
4.0	1.8	1.1	.9	.5	.3
3.2	1.8	1.1	.9	.5	.2
3.1	1.6	1.1	.9	.5	.2
3.0	1.6	1.1	.8	.5	.2
2.8	1.6	1.1	.8	.5	.2
2.8	1.6	1.1	.8	.5	.2
2.8	1.5	1.0	.7	.5	.2
2.8	1.4	1.0	.7	.5	.2
2.6	1.4	1.0	.7	.5	.2
2.5	1.4	1.0	.7	.5	.2
2.4	1.4	1.0	.7	.4	.1
2.4	1.4	1.0	.7	.4	.1
2.3	1.4	1.0	.7	.4	.1
2.3	1.4	1.0	.6	.4	.1
2.3	1.2	.9	.6	.4	

In addition, 7 other students showed neither a gain or a loss. Sixty-five of the 191 students showed a decrease.

This data distribution has been purposefully selected because it is recent, representative, and it is from the first semester. Greater strides are always made during the second semester; therefore, this distribution represents the minimum results one might expect.

A table of data of the results of the independent reading facet of the Lab appears on the next page.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE 10% INCREASE PER WEEK IN INDEPENDENT READING

Number of weeks the goal was met-- 18 weeks maximum	*Number of students who met their goals for the corresponding number of weeks*
18	*22*
17	*3*
16	*6*
15	*2*
14	*1*
13	*7*
12	*5*
11	*6*
10	*5*
9	*5*
8	*3*
7	*6*
6	*8*
5	*9*
4	*10*
3	*21*
2	*14*
1	*17*
0	*44*

In summary, the Junior High School Reading Laboratory is a precise, flexible, practical and effective reading improvement system. It is not a showcase of the latest hardware and learning packages. It is not a complex spectacle of educational legerdemain. It is superbly suited to exportation and adaptation to other schools, simply because of its organizational design and flexibility. Its structure is largely fixed only with respect to certain principles that are workable across school-specific situations and a certain nucleus of essential materials.

Because the Lab has been named as a participant in the Illinois Diffusion Network of the Title III, E.S.E.A. section of the Illinois Office of Education, it is actively soliciting inquiries from potential adopters of the program. The Lab can, under the auspices of Title III, E.S.E.A., supply a limited amount of funding and a maximum amount of services to those schools selected for adoption. Services include, as a first step, scheduling interested educators for an on-site visit to the Lab. Discussion and negotiation of adoption can thus be fostered. Once a school has formally adopted the Lab, plans would be formulated for a complete training session of staff for the adopter Lab, and other assistance in the form of recommendations for organizing and setting up the physical facilities, and assistance in the ordering of priority material. Follow-up consultation, monitoring and additional training will be provided throughout the first year of operation. Some

adopter schools may later be trained to work as trainers themselves, to assist in the establishing of other programs modeled after the Lab. Potential adopters and all interested educators are invited to visit the Lab in Urbana. To schedule a visit, write or call:

Joseph M. Riggs
Junior High School Reading Laboratory
Urbana Junior High School-Fisher
1201 South Vine Street
Urbana, Illinois 61801
217-384-3568

In lieu of a personal visit to the Lab, you might wish to request a filmstrip and cassette description of the Reading Lab and its operation. This strip and tape are available for lending on a free two-week loan basis.

OTHER PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN THE ILLINOIS DIFFUSION NETWORK

READING: "The Matteson 4-D Reading Program"
Matteson School District 162

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: "The Upper Mississippi River Eco-Center"
Thomson Community Unit School District 301

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: "Education By Choice"
Quincy School District 172

PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES: "The High-Risk Student: Intensive Care Unit"
Mattoon Community Unit School District 2

MATHEMATICS: "Pre-Algebra Development Centers"
City of Chicago School District 299

SPECIAL EDUCATION: "Multi-Sensory Approach to Learning"
Lincoln Community High School District 404

SPECIAL EDUCATION-EARLY CHILDHOOD: "Model Early Intervention Pre-Kindergarten Program"
Maine Township High School District 207

Dissemination Booklet
Prepared By
Joseph M. Riggs